

October 11, 2001

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chair, and Members
Commission on Higher Education

From: Ms. Susan Cole, Chair, and Members,
Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services

LIFE Scholarship Program
Proposed Regulatory Amendments - 2002-03 Academic Year

During the 2001 legislative session, the General Assembly approved the South Carolina Education Lottery Act. The Education Lottery Act provides for several new student aid programs, as well as revising some of the existing State student aid program, including the LIFE Scholarship Program.

The Education Lottery Act amended the definition of institutions that are eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship under Section 59-149-10(B)(1) by deleting the technical and two-year colleges. Students attending the technical and two-year colleges may be eligible to receive Lottery Tuition Assistance and students attending eligible four-year institutions may be eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship.

Additionally, because technical and two-year colleges are no longer eligible for LIFE Scholarship funding, the LIFE Scholarship regulations have been amended so that terms of eligibility are based on the students' initial classification at the time of initial enrollment at a four-year institution. Previously, the terms of eligibility were based upon the students' initial college enrollment since students were eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship at technical and two-year colleges.

According to Section 59-149-50 of the Education Lottery Act, the initial eligibility criteria for the LIFE Scholarship were revised so that students are only required to meet two of the following three criteria: 1) 3.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0; 2) 1100 SAT or 24 ACT; and/or 3) graduate in the top thirty percent of the class. Also, the award amounts for the LIFE Scholarship will increase beginning with the 2002-03 academic year according to Section 59-149-10. For eligible four-year public institutions, the award amount will increase from \$3000 per academic

year to the cost-of-tuition for thirty credit hours for the previous academic year plus a \$300 book allowance. For eligible four-year independent institutions, the award amount for the scholarship will be the average cost-of-tuition for the previous academic year at the four-year public institutions.

The Education Lottery Act also waived the high school graduation date of May 1995 or thereafter and removed the requirement that students must enroll within two years and three months of high school graduation.

The LIFE Scholarship regulations were amended to allow students enrolled in first professional degree programs eligibility for scholarship funding. "First professional degree program" is a program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree for acceptance into the program and leads to a graduate degree, which will be the student's first academic degree awarded. Students are eligible to receive the scholarship for a maximum of eight terms as long as all other eligibility criteria are met. Students who have been awarded a baccalaureate degree are not eligible for scholarship funding.

The LIFE Scholarship regulations were also amended to allow General Educational Development (GED) recipients to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship based on their higher education academic performance. GED recipients may be eligible to receive LIFE Scholarship funding, if they meet the continued eligibility requirements at the end of each academic year.

Finally, the LIFE Scholarship regulations were amended to allow students who participate in internships, cooperative programs, travel study programs, or International and National student exchange programs to receive the maximum number of available terms.

The financial aid officers representing the public and independent higher education institutions met on September 12, 2001, to provide the Commission staff with their input regarding the proposed amendments to the LIFE Scholarship regulations. Their recommendations were incorporated into the proposed regulations.

Recommendation

The Access & Equity and Student Services Committee recommend that the Commission on Higher Education approve the proposed amendments to the regulations for the LIFE Scholarship Program. If approved, the amended regulations will be submitted to the General Assembly for approval under the Administrative Procedures Act.